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The Squeamish Americans

It is a sign of the times we live in that those American patriots who spend years as undercover agents in Communist groups soon find themselves not hailed for their sacrifices but the butt of left-wing ridicule.

Meanwhile, the subversives they have unearthed are treated with indifference or given the best legal defenses the left-wing American establishment can provide.

The pattern held true in Buffalo last month. Andrew Berecz, just such an agent, testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

An immigrant, he had spent 20 years as a Communist for his adopted country, the last five of these as a known Red with the result that old friends treated him and his family as traitors.

Yet, for this extraordinary service Mr. Berecz is referred to as nothing more than a "paid informer." He is vilified by those his years have been spent to protect.

Meanwhile, he can expect committees to rise up to defend those whom he has exposed

and some unkempt, bearded youth whose father is paying his way through college and who has cut classes to lie in the gutter protesting against "HUAC" will be ballyhooed as a young idealist with a "real" concern for the people's right "to think and express their ideas without interference."

Those jaundiced thinkers who sneer at Mr. Berecz and others like him carry unmistakable traits. They despise security agencies per se, especially the CIA. Investigators, no matter who they be, are inevitably "McCarthyites" while those brought out from under the rocks, like Alger Hiss, do not even merit a word of comment.

They are especially squeamish about spying and other clandestine necessities essential to defend the national interest. If asked by their government to "keep their eyes open" while touring the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, they would recoil as though their academic virginity were being jeopardized.